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Boaters Asked to Help Stop Spread of Quagga Mussel
Boats and boating recreation at risk

Sacramento – Multiple state departments are urging boaters and watercraft users to help stop the spread of Quagga mussels along the Colorado River and into California. Particular waters of interest include Riverside County's Lake Skinner and San Diego County's Lower Otay Reservoir, Lake Dixon, and San Vicente Reservoir, all of which permit recreational access.

"With Quagga mussels on the move from the Nevada border to inland San Diego County, we need the public's help to keep them from going farther," said Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman. "Once the Quagga are established in a waterway, they have significant environmental, recreational and economic impacts."

Although they range from microscopic to the size of a fingernail, the mussels are prolific breeders and attach themselves to hard and soft surfaces, such as boats and aquatic plants.

Quagga mussels affect boaters negatively because they:

- Ruin your engine by blocking the cooling system – causing overheating.
- Increase drag on the bottom of your boat, reducing speed and wasting fuel.
- Jam steering equipment on boats.
- Require scraping and repainting of boat bottoms.
- Colonize all underwater substrates such as boat ramps, docks, lines and other underwater surfaces requiring constant cleaning.

Quagga mussel infestation can potentially lead to the closure of boating in affected waterways. They also wreak havoc with the environment, disrupting the natural food chain and releasing toxins that affect other species. Spread of the Quagga could result in millions of dollars in damage to water transport facilities.

Various watercraft are the primary transporters of Quagga mussels. All boaters and anyone who accesses freshwater aquatic environments should take the following steps to inhibit the spread of the Quagga mussel:

- Inspect all exposed surfaces - small mussels feel like sandpaper to the touch.
- Wash the hull of each watercraft thoroughly; preferably with high pressure/hot water.

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Quagga 2

- Remove all plants and animal material.
- Drain all water and dry all areas.
- Drain and dry the lower outboard unit.
- Clean and dry all live-wells.
- Empty and dry any buckets.
- Dispose of all bait in the trash.
- Wait five days and keep watercraft dry between launches into different fresh waters.

It is important for boaters to follow these steps and cooperate with vessel inspections that are being conducted at a number of Department of Food and Agriculture border inspection stations and around the state.

These invasive freshwater mollusks were first detected in California in January 2007, in Lake Havasu on the Colorado River. In subsequent months, they were found in two Southern California water systems using Colorado River water, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) and the San Diego County Water Authority.

MWD documented the mussels in March and again in July in its 242-mile Colorado River aqueduct, and also at Lake Mathews near Riverside and at Lake Skinner in Winchester, east of Temecula. On Aug. 21, the mussels were discovered in San Diego County, at San Vicente Reservoir near Lakeside.

Thus far, the mussels have not been found in California's State Water Project (SWP), which draws its water from Northern California watersheds. Environmental scientists are monitoring the system, the largest water and power system in the United States. The main risk of mussel introduction in the SWP is from trailered boats.

A multi-agency taskforce that includes the Department of Fish and Game, the Department of Boating and Waterways, the Department of Water Resources and California State Parks has launched an outreach campaign to alert boaters and the public to the Quagga mussel threat. This effort is also being coordinated with MWD and the San Diego County Water Authority. For information on the Quagga mussel response, visit the DFG Web site at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/quaggamussel/>.

A public toll-free number, 1-866-440-9530, has been established for boaters and anyone involved with activities on lakes and rivers seeking information on the invasive and destructive Quagga mussels. The toll-free number is available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.